

## OUR CRYING NEED

W. D. FURRY

Those that have to do with church statistics to any extent whatever, must certainly realize that something is wrong in the church. Never was the church so well organized as now. Provision is made so that all despite age or culture may find a place and work. This is certainly a long step in the right direction. Never did the church represent so much wealth. The bulk of the world's wealth is in the possession of professed Christians. Never was the intellectual status of the ministry and laity so high. Never were there so many institutions of learning either directly or indirectly under the influence of the church. Never so much and so good religious literature published and disseminated. And never so many movements and conventions for the development of the Christian graces and the deepening of the spiritual life, yet despite all these, there is a marked decadence in the progress of the development of the Christian life, and an increasing spirit of worldliness upon the part of the members of the various churches. Evidently there is something wrong somewhere. I see enough, and who does not, to convince me of this. I am not pessimistic, neither optimistic. I endeavor to see things just as they are. I would have you see them so. When church members prefer to go to a Thursday evening band concert rather than the prayer-meeting; when the Sunday school must go often without officers and teachers, because of the officers and teachers taking a pleasure trip, and when the Sunday evening service is neglected because of the warm weather, something is wrong in the church. These and many others convince me that something is wrong. Our crying need is to make right this wrong. How shall it be done? I must be brief, and confine myself to a few things only and that refer to the Brethren church in particular.

1. To know what salvation is and does. Many do not know. Few have ever appreciated the greatness of our redemption. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the basis of all salvation is rarely ever preached today. The world would like to do away with the idea of a blood-red redemption. This is what Cain attempted to do. A sort of "Posy Piety" and "Horticultural worship" is taking place of the worship of Jesus as the "slain Lamb." In our current literature and theology the ethical view of Christ's death and not the sacrificial view is predominant. And we are today reaping the results of holding such a view—a low standard of Christian life and service. You cannot expect it to be otherwise, and never will be otherwise than this until the church properly appreciates what salvation really is and does.

2. We need a more intelligent faith. We need not only to believe, but to know what we believe and why we believe it. We should have a reason for the faith that is within us. This is a scriptural injunction. All intelligent faith is a strong faith. Such faith is not tossed about by every wind of

doctrine. The possessor of such faith is alike an honor to God and the church. Upon such the strength of the church depends. Such are church members with convictions. Not all are so. These latter are the ones that say they can belong to *any church*. As a rule they usually do so far as their service is concerned. There is danger in this so called *liberality*. We must cry out against it. To be sure one can, ought to be, a Christian anywhere and everywhere, but one can not be, (even speaking naturally) as efficient a worker in one church as in another. We have never seen such members or churches that were worth anything whatever. May I refer to one such church. A large tabernacle was built in Brooklyn some few years ago. It was to be the home of a so called liberal people. Provision was made by which people of any convictions whatever, and people without any at all, might become members. A baptistery was placed for those that preferred baptism; a fountain for those that preferred to be sprinkled; and a crucifix was placed so that even Catholics might here find a place of worship. But what was the result? If anything whatever can be expected from this liberality, we must find it here. There is no record that this church ever gave to missions as many pennies as it had members; no record of any Christian workers having been sent out from it; and the church was never felt to be a power for good in its own city. Evidently such a church is displeasing to God. One Sunday morning this church, the building, went up in smoke, and it is up there yet. Ah, there is danger in this so called liberality.

Every church stands or should stand at least for something distinctive. Otherwise it is not needed. And the members of this church should belong to it by knowing and standing to those things that make the church distinctive. The strength of any church is not in the number of noses but in the number of such members. A church is a means through which we serve Christ, and we ought to be a member of that church wherein we can best serve Christ. The strength of the Brethren church depends upon those who are members of the Brethren church, because the Brethren church affords the best opportunity for serving and obeying Christ. Do you say that other churches are as good as the Brethren church? Well that may be, but you can not be equally at home in any others, if you have any convictions whatever upon the distinctive teachings and practices of the Brethren church. Such members will be loyal to and support every institution fostered by the church. This is the sole plea for the existence of Ashland college. Upon this plea alone, can it ask support of the church. And it is the duty of the church to support it. There are to be sure other colleges and better, but none can take the place and do the work that Ashland college is set to do. The Brethren church has been slow to recognize this fact, and has in consequence lost much ground as well as its hold upon the young people of the church. This position should

be placed before the various local churches; and the distinguishing features of the church should be so dwelt upon and taught to the young of the church, so that in coming years our church membership will not be decimated as it now bids fair to become. There should be "Schools of Doctrine" and courses of readings from the scriptures setting forth the scriptural reasons for the existence and polity of the Brethren church. We made a step toward this when we began to publish our own S. S. literature. There are however some steps to be taken yet.

I am now convinced, though recently, that we need a distinctive young people's society. I now see some dangers in the Y. P. S. C. E. It alone is responsible for the great number of *convictionless* Christians, that say they can belong anywhere. I am not opposed to co-operation in conventions and union meetings, but am opposed to affiliation with churches or societies from churches that differ from us so radically upon points of doctrine and practice where there should be no difference. I have reached this conclusion, only after much serious thought, and am fully persuaded that if we are to retain our position and hold upon the young people represented in the church we must pursue some such course. This only will bring the distinctive features of the church into the knowledge of the people of the church and make possible a more intelligent faith in the church and its doctrines.

There are other crying needs, but these need to be settled first. Then the others will easily settle themselves.

## NOTICE.

Members of the Brethren Publication Board will please take notice that there will be a meeting of the Board at Winona Park, Ind., Wednesday evening, August 24. A full attendance is desired as important business, incident to the closing of the publication year will be transacted.

J. M. TOMBAUGH, Pres.

July 25, 1898.

## WHY GO TO CONERENCE?

C. F. YODER

The kingdom of heaven is an organic society and is to be extended not by bush-whacking methods but by the co-operation of its members. This necessitates gatherings for conference. The disciples and their Master frequently held counsel, Luke 9:12 etc. The church under the apostles found conference necessary and today every live church has its frequent gatherings for fellowship and business. Consider the blessings of such meetings.

## I. WISDOM

The Book says, "In a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom." This united wisdom is needed by the affairs of the church.